



**BUILD**  
YOUR MINISTRY

**TRAIN**  
YOUR LEADERS

**LEAD**  
YOUR GROUP

**EXPLORE**  
NEW IDEAS

**BIBLE**  
STUDIES

All ▼

BROWSE FOLLOW US:   

STORE

LOG IN

PRICING

## ARTICLES

Home > Articles > 2014



ARTICLE

# Discover Your Leadership Style

Learn how to leverage your strengths.

David T. Olson

17

tweet

save

email

print

In [Romans 12:6](#), [1 Corinthians 12:4-7](#), and elsewhere, Paul teaches that God has given different types of gifts to Christians. While there is unity in the body of Christ, there definitely is not uniformity. Instead, the diversity that Scripture celebrates in God's whole creation is also reflected in the gifts of Christians.

Four years ago, I was flying from Minneapolis to Los Angeles. I had been using a three-legged leadership model (spirituality, chemistry, and strategy) as a teaching instrument for two or three years. As I settled into my seat, a thought came into my mind. *If there are only three legs, there can only be six possible sequences of the combination of spirituality, chemistry, and strategy in leaders.* I wondered to myself, *Can I name those six? Will people lead in a manner similar to others with their style?* By the time the plane landed, I had named the six styles and was eager to find out whether each group was distinct from the other five in its leadership style.

The Leadership Stool model (a stool with three legs representing spirituality, chemistry, and strategy) identifies six distinct Christian leadership styles. We give leaders an assessment which identifies their scores in these three areas. The sequence of the scores of your strongest, intermediate, and weakest legs indicates which leadership style God has given you. Leaders who are strongest in chemistry are either inspirational leaders or relational leaders. Leaders who are strongest in spirituality are either imaginative leaders or sacred leaders. Leaders who are strongest in strategy are either building leaders or mission leaders.

All six styles have equal value in the body of Christ. Each style brings together a

## FREE NEWSLETTERS

☒ Small Groups (Weekly) ?

☒ Christian Bible Studies (Weekly) ?

Email Address



[MORE NEWSLETTERS](#)



# 16 Books

that will

change your

ministry

read now

## RELATED



ARTICLE

The Essential Guide for Small-Group

unique set of leadership gifts and perspectives that help build God's kingdom, with each style contributing something that the other five do not. When all six styles work together, they demonstrate the completeness and unity of the body of Christ while affirming the variety of personalities and gifts given by the Holy Spirit. Most important, each of the six styles employs a different way of leading.

## The Six Leadership Styles

Growing in your leadership style requires an understanding of the role of your strongest leg, of how the intermediate leg can magnify the fruit of your strongest leg, and of specific ways to bolster your weakest leg. The results and fruit of your ministry will differ significantly from someone with a different leadership style. When you read about your style, you may be surprised at how accurately it describes you. As you learn about your unique style, you will gain insight into how God created you, showing you a clear pathway to become a stronger and wiser leader. As you read about the other five styles, the descriptions will give you insights into how God created others you know and work with and why they lead as they do.

### Sacred Leaders

Sacred leaders are strongest in spirituality, intermediate in chemistry, and weakest in strategy. They are gifted by God to connect spirituality with people and encourage them to grow deeper in their knowledge and relationship with God, while paying close attention to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Sacred leaders are spiritually sensitive people. An adjective often used to describe the role of a sacred leader is *deep*. They lead through their ability to genuinely connect with people by communicating the deep things of God. Many sacred leaders have the [Ephesians 4:11](#) gift of teacher. Mary (the sister of Martha), John, and Isaiah are three biblical examples of sacred leaders.

### Relational Leaders

Relational leaders are strongest in chemistry, intermediate in spirituality, and weakest in strategy. They are gifted by God to emotionally connect with individuals and groups, and to inspire them to follow Jesus and love each other. An adjective often used to describe relational leaders is *loving*. They naturally lead through their ability to create caring relationships with large numbers of people. Many relational leaders have the [Ephesians 4:11](#) gift of pastor or shepherd. Barnabas, Esther, and Philip are three biblical examples of relational leaders.

### Inspirational Leaders

Inspirational leaders are strongest in chemistry, intermediate in strategy, and weakest in spirituality. They are gifted by God to connect powerfully with a crowd and motivate them to follow Jesus by engaging in the mission of God. An adjective often used to describe inspirational leaders is *motivational*—they lead through their ability to inspire and influence people, especially through public speaking. Inspirational leaders excel at getting people to rally around a vision. Many inspirational leaders have the [Ephesians 4:11](#) gift of evangelist. Peter, Joshua, and Elijah are three biblical examples of inspirational leaders.

### Building Leaders

Building leaders are strongest in strategy, intermediate in chemistry, and weakest in spirituality. They are gifted by God to strategize for growth and enlist others to help enlarge the mission of God. They are best described as knowing how to grow organizations. They instinctively know how to create the right conditions and systems that produce numeric growth and stronger ministry so that more people will come, join, and serve. Most building leaders have a growth

## Leaders

A new tool for your entire team from Bill Search!  
*Amy Jackson*



TRAINING TOOL

### Develop Your Ministry Team

Practical tips for developing your team—both as individuals and as one cohesive unit  
*Laura Holland, Bill Search, Jon Noto, and more*



ARTICLE

### Are You an Unhealthy Leader?

No well-intentioned leader would set out to lead this way, but it happens all the time.  
*Peter Scazzero*



ARTICLE

### The Missing Piece in Discipleship

How learning about emotional health transformed our church  
*Rich Gorman*



ARTICLE

### Three Game-Changers for People-Pleasing Leaders

Emotionally healthy leaders are fueled by healthy motivations.  
*Jon Noto*



BIBLE STUDY

### Women Leaders Bible Study Bundle

Serve God and lead others out of your calling.

gift and an organizational gift. They have a hybrid [Ephesians 4:11](#) gift that I call an "apostolist"—having some of the qualities of an apostle and some of the qualities of an evangelist. Deborah, Nehemiah, and Joseph are three biblical examples of building leaders.

#### Mission Leaders

Mission leaders are strongest in strategy, intermediate in spirituality, and weakest in chemistry. They are gifted by God with the spiritual vision needed for the immediate future. They call people to follow a deeper gospel and then multiply new expressions of the mission of God. A word often used to describe a mission leader is *multiplier*. Mission leaders call people to live out an active gospel while multiplying disciples, programs, and ventures. Their best fruitfulness comes through reproducing new leaders, new ministries, and new churches. Many mission leaders have the [Ephesians 4:11](#) gift of an apostle. Paul, Gideon, and Moses are biblical examples of mission leaders.

#### Imaginative Leaders

Imaginative leaders are strongest in spirituality, intermediate in strategy, and weakest in chemistry. They are gifted by God to receive a vision from God for this generation and motivate people to step out in faith and live out a new way of being the people of God within their culture. An adjective used to describe an imaginative leader is *creative*. They use their spiritual creativity to synthesize new models and then use strategy to implement those imaginative ideas. Many imaginative leaders have the [Ephesians 4:11](#) gift of a prophet. Samuel, Daniel, and John the Baptist are biblical examples of imaginative leaders.

## Avoiding Two Pitfalls

Understanding and valuing all six styles will help you avoid two common pitfalls. First, most people overvalue their own style and undervalue styles that are different from their own. For example, sacred leaders seldom resonate with inspirational or building leaders. The opposite is also true. The beauty of the diversity of gifts and styles is tarnished when a Christian leader believes his or her style is the most valuable one and implicitly diminishes the importance of the other five styles.

A second pitfall is an inordinate focus on the deficiencies of the other styles. This can be avoided by understanding that every style has specific weaknesses. The following are challenge areas for each of the leadership styles.

1. Sacred leader. A common challenge of sacred leaders is their lack of practical usefulness. They often struggle to translate their deep spirituality into physical ministry productivity.
2. Relational leader. A common challenge of relational leaders is their lack of clear focus. They love being with people but often do not know where or how they should lead those people.
3. Inspirational leader. A common challenge of inspirational leaders is their lack of deep foundations. Often they are so busy spending time with groups or crowds that they do not take enough time to break away and nurture scriptural depth or intimacy with God.
4. Building leader. A common challenge of building leaders is their lack of vital spirituality. Managing the expanding fruit of their ministry usually consumes so much of their time and energy that they have little time left for a strong walk with God.

5. Mission leader. A common challenge of mission leaders is their lack of people sensitivity. Their strong task orientation and their continual creation of new mission endeavors often keeps them from empathizing with the people they lead.

6. Imaginative leader. A common challenge of imaginative leaders is their lack of relational wisdom. Their heads can be in the clouds, filled with great ideas, so they often miss critical relational clues sent by those they work with and minister to.

Take an assessment and find out more about your Christian leadership style with [\*Discovering Your Leadership Style\*](#).

—Adapted from [\*Discovering Your Leadership Style\*](#) by David T. Olson. Copyright 2014 by David T. Olson. Used by permission of [\*InterVarsity Press\*](#), P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426.

KEYWORDS: [Discipleship](#); [Equipping](#); [Leadership](#)

CATEGORY: [Lead Your Group](#)

REFERENCES: None

DATE ADDED: August 04, 2014



SmallGroups.com: [Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [My Account](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help & Info](#)

STAY INFORMED. SIGN UP FOR OUR FREE NEWSLETTER.

ENTER YOUR EMAIL

SIGN UP

CHRISTIANITY  TODAY

GIVE TODAY

[Who We Are](#)

[What We Do](#)

[Stories](#)

[Partner With Us](#)

[Careers](#)

[Media Room](#)

[Follow Us](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Help](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[My Account](#)

[Log In](#)

*beautiful*ORTHODOXY

*Christianity Today strengthens the church by richly communicating the breadth of the true, good, and beautiful gospel.*

[Learn more](#)

